

The BEATITUDES. [4]

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BEING THE  
SUBSTANCE  
OF A  
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN  
DUBLIN,

December the 21st, 1753.

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By JOHN CENNICK.

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A faithful man shall abound with blessings. Prov.  
xxviii. 20.

All these blessings shall come upon thee. Deut.  
xxviii. 2.

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T H E  
B E A T I T U D E S.

MATT. v. 3, &c.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

\*\*\* THIS is the beginning of our Saviour’s  
\* T \* sermon upon the mount, and is the  
\* \* more remarkable, because as the Old  
\*\*\* Testament or the last of the prophets,  
ends with a threatening and curse, so  
our Saviour begins his New Testament with a blessing, and opens his mouth in the gospel dispensation with gracious promises.

In this discourse he has taught his disciples many weighty lessons; the whole has been justly praised by all his people, and is a transcript of his mind, and the best ecclesiastical rule, ritual, and rubrick of his universal church.

He delivered this discourse upon a mountaine (for great multitudes followed him) that so all might see and hear him. The Scribes and Pharisees without doubt despised him for this manner of preaching, and especially those who were so fond of the temple, that they had hated the Samaritans, and such as worshipped out of it: But hence we learn, that to our Saviour all places are alike, and may be used for the publishing his gospel; and though houses set apart for his worship and the divine service are good and convenient, yet we must not forget that "he dwells not in temples made with hands, but where two or three are met in his name he is present in the midst." The true temple shall be opened and manifest in another world, and this is God and the Lamb himself. We should not place any great matter in the form of setting forth the word of God, since Jesus frequently sat and taught the people. He meant by it the greatest familiarity, and spoke with creatures as a father to his dear children. His being willing to be seen and heard by all, should teach us, he is not willing any should be hindered to look upon him and be saved, nor is it of him when he is not heard to eternal life. The God of this world is the sole author and cause of all that blindness, backwardness and unwillingness in men to come to Jesus that they might have life.

The time will not allow me to speak of all the blessed doctrines contained in this sermon of our Lord's at this time: I will therefore only speak of those beatitudes or blessings pronounced in the former part of it, and this I purpose to do in a simple and free manner.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It must not be left unobserved that



that the poor in spirit, or the spiritually poor people<sup>r</sup> have the first right to all the blessings of God. This is to me very important.

When St. Luke relates the particulars of this divine discourse he mentions only the poor, but St. Matthew is more clear; for though our Saviour's disciples were poor men, and but few noble or rich called to his church, yet therefore, because the poor or common people heard him gladly, and followed him, are they not blessed, but the poor in spirit, the souls who are poor and worthless in their own eyes, these are they our Saviour's blessings. It might not be amiss to observe, that poor and mean people in the world have succeeded better with our Saviour than the rich or wealthy; but perhaps the God of equity has so ordered it, that some who desire it have been vessels of honour in the world, and had their good things here, while others have had their evil things, and been vessels of dishonour, but have found the Pearl of great price, and in their low estate, like the virgin Mary have found the Lord, and that treasure laid up in heaven. Though, as I said before, the outward or bodily poverty have not always had this effect, or been the reason of their being chosen into the kingdom of heaven; but where the wants and afflictions, the poverty and penury of this life, have put the soul upon seeking true riches, there it must be confessed, it was good for them that they have been afflicted. Riches, on the other hand, have proved a hurt and a snare, and hindered many to be saved. Our Saviour says, how hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God? They have much to leave, they find it difficult to submit to the foolishness of the preaching of faith, a sense of honour keeps them ashamed of Jesus  
and

and his people; their education teaches them to despise the unpolished simplicity and artless behaviour of the children of God; they know how to reason; they are high, and all their little religious acts are so magnified, that it often seems to them as if they supported the cause of the Lord, and their power defended it, or as if Jesus was beholden to them; and when they put on the form of godliness, they are too apt to lord it over the meaner sort, and people of an inferior rank; thus they cheat themselves and miss true happiness; or are they profane? then their riches helps them on in their mad course, and paves their way and makes it smooth to hell. They take great liberties, they jest and ridicule the scriptures, they mock the faith, dispute atheistically, serve their lusts, pleasures, and the God of this world with all greediness, oppress their subjects, and are quite unconcerned about giving any account of their stewardship, till they are called away, and then what good will all their riches do them? Who of their companions can save them, or of what advantage will it be for them to recollect how great or wealthy they have been in the world, when they have lost their own souls? Many of these, if they had been poor in the world, perhaps, might have had a part in the kingdom of God; and, on the other hand, I doubt not but that many in heaven might have perished had they been rich or great in the world. The wise Disposer of all things knows what he does; he has chosen his people should have little of the world, but he has prepared for them a kingdom: We should not therefore once repine because the blessings of this life seem to be so unequally divided, or because some are so loaded with good things, and we have but food and raiment, or  
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even suffer in that respect. He that sitteth in heaven ruleth all things well. Let us only get an interest in him, and we shall not envy them who have their corn and wine and oil increased, we are far richer than they all, and far happier; for when the earth is burnt up, and time is no longer, we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and riches which no moth or rust can corrupt, or thief break through and steal.

After all that has been said, where a man is a faithful steward of that committed to him, and where his heart leaves all that he has and gets hold of Jesus our dear Saviour, his having been rich or noble will be no hindrance to his salvation; and where a poor man despises our Saviour's grace, and lives careless of his blood and merits, and does not come to him, his poverty will not help him: He may be a beggar, or suffer want, or be very low and poor in the world, and yet have a high, proud, and stubborn heart, and be of that unhappy number that God beholds afar off.

True poverty of spirit is, as St. Austin observes, humility; it is a lowliness of heart which proceeds from a divine conviction of our sinful and bad state by nature.

That man is poor who has no money, cloaths, house, or friend, but is in debt greatly, his wife and children are sold to be slaves, and he cast into prison till payment be made. Thus he is poor in spirit who knows he has no good thing dwelling in him, he has no real righteousness, he has a sense of his owing his Lord very much, he has nothing to offer, can promise nothing, can do nothing, feel his guilt, his sinful nature, his enmity his carelessness his hardness of heart, and incapacity to help himself. He looks upon himself directly in  
that



that state described in the sixteenth chapter of Eze-  
 kiel, cast out to the loathing of his person in the open  
 field, neither washed, cloathed, or pitied, but friend-  
 less and undone. No one but he that has experi-  
 enced a deep awakening by means of the Holy  
 Spirit, can judge of such people's case. How mean,  
 how little and worthless they are in their own  
 eyes! how self-condemned and abhorred for all  
 they do, or think, or say! how sincerely they can  
 tell our Saviour, I am poor and needy! This is in-  
 deed the estate and condition of all men, but they  
 do not; they will not know and confess it. Hence  
 arise all the deceits of self-righteousness, and all  
 the fancies of being holy, good, or better than  
 others. Hence they frequently suppose themselves  
 rich, and increased with goods, and have need of  
 nothing, but imagine they have been educated well,  
 done a great deal of good, wronged no-body, kept  
 to church, given alms, and been merciful, chari-  
 table to the poor, and made a tolerable proficien-  
 cy in the knowledge of the scriptures; but such  
 are the Laodiceans, the luke-warm people, whom  
 our Saviour will spue out of his mouth, and whose  
 righteousness is like the morning dew. A poor  
 sinner has not such thoughts, he cannot value him-  
 self any more; he looks upon himself on a level  
 with the worst and the vilest of men, and that not  
 perhaps because he has been a murderer, an adul-  
 terer, or house-breaker, but on account of his fil-  
 thy and nasty heart: He finds fault with all  
 that others about him may praise and commend  
 in him; and under such a sense of his fallen and  
 spoiled state, he sits down at Jesu's feet, or begs  
 at his dooor of mercy: He can plead nothing he  
 has done, or merited: He has nothing unspotted  
 or without blemish to lay upon his altar, all that  
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he has is lame, and halt, and blind, and therefore his only hope, his thirst and daily cry is, Have mercy on me ! O dear Saviour pity me !

No angel's tongue can describe how dear and precious Jesus is in such a soul's eyes ; they would part with their lives joyfully to know him as their own ; had they ten worlds they would not hesitate a moment about it, but would part with them all to feel his love, and be assured of his tender mercy ; " Blessed are such poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven." I know thy poverty, says our Saviour to such, but thou art high. It was his first and chiefest design in the redemption to help such poor people ; he looks on them as men ready to perish, souls that owed much, but had nothing to pay, and therefore he would stand their Friend, and make satisfaction for them ; he became their surety, stood in their place, paid off the frightful score, and obtained and provided the kingdom of heaven for them. O this is amazing grace ! but not more wonderful than true and certain. What joy must a christian soul perceive and feel in his heart, who just now sat down weary, or fighting for mercy, with a heart ready to break at our Saviour's feet, and yet, through a consciousness of sin, could hardly hope to be accepted, when our Saviour whispers within, " Thine is the kingdom of heaven. I have loved thee with everlasting love. I had hid myself a little moment and thou wast troubled, but now the winter is past, and the storm gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come, rise up my love, my dove, and come away !" O such an one must think with shame, Lord, what am I ! and must be abased and bowed down with thankfulness and gratitude for ever, and more and more wonder at this grace and great salvation, and

cleave to our Saviour, love and value his death and obedience, and be resolved only to exalt and bless him for ever.

This blessedness always accompanies a person spiritually poor, they are blessed, and shall be blessed. Theirs is the kingdom. No sooner is a soul stripped of all self-holiness and dead to the law, i. e. without any hope of help thereby, but quite poor in mind and heart, ventures to the cross or feet of Jesus; but the Holy Spirit comforts him and lets him know, the kingdom of heaven is his; he leads him in to possess it, and grants him such a lot of his part therein, strikes him with so deep a sense of our Saviour's free and eternal love to him, and at the same time gives him such a foretaste of this kingdom which is now his, and of which there shall be no end, that the remembrance of this hour, this happy time, shall always be fresh and lively to him for ever; and let what will happen afterwards to him which can either pain, or grieve, or trouble him, or sink his spirits, this shall still comfort him, that the kingdom of heaven is his; and as long as he abides under the sense of his own poverty, so long shall the same Lord and Saviour refresh and bless him in this manner, till he enters the gates into the fulness of this kingdom, at God's right hand in the glory everlasting.

All the blessings in the Old Testament were promised by the prophets to the poor: He helpeth the poor when he crieth, the needy, and him that has no helper. He lifted the poor out of the mire. He considereth the poor. "I will dwell, saith he, with him that is poor, and trembleth at my word." Expressions of this nature are found in almost every book of the scripture, and all the meaning of these is comprehended in these gracious words of our Saviour,

our, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed are they who are mean, and little, and worthless in their own eyes, as a bit of dust, as a poor, small and contemptible worm, who are convinced of their own nothingness and poverty; to such belongs the kingdom of heaven; for such Christ died; out of pity to such he was extreme poor, that they through his poverty might become rich; and by his having nothing, and being a servant, they might possess all things, and be kings and priests to God, rich in faith, and with that gold tried in the fire, and having got the treasure hid in the field, spoken of by our Saviour, they shall be esteemed rich indeed of God and all the angels in eternity.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." In that solemn and awful charge given to the destroying angels in the ninth of Ezekiel wherein they are commanded "to slay utterly old and young, nor suffer their eyes to spare or pity," they are forbid to come near those that mourn. It was also mentioned as a chief part of our Saviour's office in the world, "He shall comfort those that mourn." Solomon also had said, It was safer to be in the house of mourning than in the house of mirth. But who are these meant in the text? The mourners of Sion; they are people whose eyes God has opened to see their own hearts, poor people who feel their sin, and want salvation. Some, when they are a little awakened, comfort themselves with thinking they are not very bad, but better than many others; or let their friends comfort them by persuading them the same, or that they are good christians already, and in a safe way; they call all spiritual concern a madness, and take all due care to keep people from the danger; yea, if a most



abandoned liver, a notorious drunkard, or whoremonger, of whom they had before no manner of care, should come under any apprehensions of danger, or should grow uneasy about his future state, such would be very ready to help him out of this error, and advise him to be of good cheer, to ride out, or go to the play, or get into some merry company, or change the air, or take physick; and often souls are comforted by this means, and they seem to get out of all their fears or uneasiness directly; for they have had comforters, but such as Job's were all such! Miserable comforters indeed! These are they of whom the prophet complains so heavily, "They heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." But a soul truly convinced of sin cannot and will not be comforted with such things; "they look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for her only son." Nothing less than the Holy Ghost can comfort them. All they want is to know they are forgiven and shall be saved; they want to be assured of their being children of God, and at peace with him through Jesus Christ. These are the mourners spoken of in this place; they feel the want of a Saviour, they cannot be put off with health, riches, company, pleasures, &c. they are too sensible of their guilt and sin, too heavy laden and weary, too sick and disordered, and uneasy to be diverted with any thing less than the kisses of the Beloved. As long as he is at a distance, they are troubled till they feel his love shed abroad in their hearts; they mourn, and they shall be comforted. Our Saviour will wipe away the tears from their eyes, he will speak peace to their hearts; they cannot do without his presence, and they shall have it for evermore;



more; they will not rest without his consolation, and he will send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to comfort. "I will comfort you, saith he, as a mother comforts her only son; I will remove thy fears and jealousies, and assure thee of my affection and loving-kindness; I will be thy good Saviour; I will forgive thee, and thy past mis-spent life I will forget, and enter into an everlasting covenant with thee that thou shalt be my child. Thus it happened with Hezekiah, he mourned like a dove and was alone, and comfortless like a swallow upon the house-top, and turned to the wall, wept and said, Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me, and the Lord heard his supplication, and saw his tears, he heard his moan and comforted him, assuring him all his sins were cast behind his back. Thus he treated David, Paul, Cornelius, and as many as mourned after him, and thus he does in our days. The mourning of a soul after salvation is nothing else but being sick of love, and languishing for the Holy Spirit to assure him he is beloved by our Saviour; and till he is this way comforted he must mourn, he cannot help it, and if any thing short of the blood and pardon of the Lamb can stop his grief, he is an unhappy person, be he who he will.

There is such a blessedness attainable, such a divine assurance of the love of God to us, and such a certainty of our going to heaven as can refresh and comfort the otherwise inconsolable. All that sincerely seek salvation, and neither want to cheat themselves, or suffer themselves to be cheated by others, shall be comforted with this eternal consolation. Let him only turn o the Man of sorrows, and mourn after him and he shall be blessed, the Lord himself shall comfort him, and the days of his

his mourning shall have an eternal end ; “ the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, they shall be comforted.”

“ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” A meek person is a tender-hearted person, or, as it is expressed in scripture, a contrite one, a bruised or broken-hearted soul. His conscience is softened by looking upon Jesus, he has learned it of him. He no more behaves impudently or strong, he is no more careless or hardened in his natural state : but it is just so with him as it was with Peter when our Saviour looked upon him, his eyes and heart melted immediately, he cursed and lyed no more, but with bitter tears sought pardon, so he melts before the Lamb of God ; a sharp word can pierce through such, every tender conviction fastens upon their heart, and an openness to confess and acknowledge their being to blame is visible in them. They are poor sinners, whose hearts, consciences, and eyes are softened by the blood of Jesus. A sight of his death has stamped an everlasting mark upon their foreheads, and made their inmost soul like melted wax. Their tenderness of conscience, scrupulosity, and fear of doing any thing wrong to grieve our Saviour, often may expose them to the censures of a blind world, wherein they are like fools and babes, and those who mock them are indeed far more wise in their generation than they. They shall inherit the earth. They properly inherit this world, for they have in the presence and enjoyment of our Saviour’s love, an hundred fold more here than all they can lose or suffer on his account, and the world to come shall be theirs also. They are now the only happy people ; let the weather be fair or stormy, let their state in life be easy or difficult, let them be sickly or healthy, be beloved or hated, or have much or suffer want, they are well ; every morsel they eat

is sweet, and, as it were, dipped in the blood of Jesus; their sufferings are the honour of enduring something from the world for Christ's sake. Their life is the life of the Son of God, their death the death of the righteous, and eternal gain. Are they sick? They cannot forget, every pain helps gently to loose the silver cord and break the earthen vessel, that they may fly away and be at rest. Is the weather bad? Have they long journies to go? Are they exposed to trials of penury or want? how happy are they, since they shall soon arrive at the haven where they would be! No storm shall threaten them after a few days. Yet a little while and they shall hunger and thirst no more. But when the Lord their Saviour shall make a new heaven and a new earth, they shall inherit it, they shall be the inhabitants with him in his new world, and shall follow him whithersoever he goeth.

“Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” The great desire and pressing after righteousness, is here and in many other places called hungering and thirsting; since no hungry man so wants bread when he is starving, no man perishing for lack of drink so longs and thirsts for water as an awakened soul longs for the righteousness of Christ. All mankind are more or less sensible, that they must be righteous, and that without holiness no man can see the Lord, but then they generally make a righteousness of their morality, duties, works, and prayers, and this is always the case till the Lord's eyes try their fig-leaved, self-wrought garment, and as soon as his voice calls and awakes them from their dream, and he opens their eyes to see their nakedness and the insufficiency of all their own doings, and how far short they fall from the righteousness which avails before God, it is

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no wonder that they feel distress, and begin to be in want of a better righteousness. As soon as the obedience and sufferings of Christ Jesus are preached before such people, the Holy Spirit stirs up in them such a hunger and thirst for him and his merits, as is insatiable. They languish and pant for salvation as a dry land for the refreshing rain, and cannot rest till they have obtained their desire, or taken, as it were, the "kingdom of heaven by violence, for the violent take it by force." To be in such a state, in such a hungry and eager condition, athirst for our Saviour's blood and righteousness, is a blessedness, for they shall be filled; they shall have what they want; they shall know what that means, "He will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" he shall be filled, or as it is said, He shall satiate the hungry soul with goodness, or as the virgin Mary expresses it, "He filleth the hungry with good things." They shall be clothed with the righteousness of our Lord Jesus, it shall be to them a white robe; they shall be secured therein, be justified thereby, be so safe, so healed, so happy, and satisfied, that they shall be filled, in the strictest sense and stand compleat and perfect before God by this means, and be inwardly cleansed and blessed in their own souls. Let then such as now hunger and thirst for the Lamb and his righteousness be of good comfort, they shall be filled, they shall be satisfied with him, and have enough to all eternity.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." When a soul is converted and pardoned he becomes merciful; he cannot suffer a revengeful thought; he may not be bitter or cruel, our Saviour will not suffer such a spirit, it is not of him, but of the world and satan. Of Jesus we learn to be tender-hearted, long-suffering, and of a  
forgiving



forgiving nature. It is so in our hearts, and whoso cannot forgive, he is not forgiven. Let it appear or cloak itself in what manner it will, come disguised as it pleases, all revenge, barbarity, severity, and repaying evil is sinful; but who is merciful and ready to forgive, he shall find his heavenly Father measure the same to him, and in all his mistakes and failings he shall be forgiven, and feel what a merciful Saviour he has to deal with. Hence our Saviour teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" and this also is his doctrine, "If ye forgive not, neither shall ye be forgiven," or, as he saith in the parable, "Did not I forgive thee when thou desiredst me? Shouldst not thou also have forgiven thy fellow-servant?"

Let then no sort of resentment have a place in our hearts, it is pride. Let no rancour, sourness, or hard thoughts find room in our breasts, it is against our Saviour's mind. Let us be glad to forgive, ready to help the poor and needy, and pity all in distress, in prisons, in debt, in affliction, in danger, in pain or sickness, in want, and under oppression, and should our enemy hunger, let us rejoice to feed him, and should he thirst, let us give him to drink, and have a merciful heart and behaviour toward all men, especially to religious people and such as believe, so shall we obtain mercy and favour of God in our need, and he will not deal with us after our sins, but after the multitude of his mercies. But if we behave cruel, it shall come home to you again; behave severe, so shall others behave to you, revenge yourselves at a convenient time, when it is in your power, and all shall one day, sooner or later, justly be returned upon your own heads, and full measure, pressed down and running over, shall men heap hard things and very bitter and heavy into your bosoms. The true way to be mer-

ciful is to learn it of our Saviour, for whoſo is acquainted with him, and continues in his love, is loving and merciful, ſo that men can perceive he has been with Jeſus. Be ye then merciful, for your Father in heaven is merciful, and ye ſhall obtain mercy.

“Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God.” The pure-hearted people are ſuch as have obtained the true faith in Chriſt, and whoſe hearts have been purified through the blood he has ſprinkled thereon. None are pure in heart by nature; for by nature all our hearts are corrupted and deſperately wicked, and thence proceed all evil thoughts, luſts, murders thefts, blaſphemies &c. which deſile the man; but as ſoon as our Saviour beſprinkles us with water we are made clean, and when he waſhes us in his blood, we are whiter than ſnow. The eyes are no more full of adulteries, the ears no more open to filthy ſpeaking, the heart changed, and chaſte, and pure. They are juſtified, they are ſanctified, and not only have made the outside of the cup or platter clean. but the inſide is clean alſo. Theſe are ſouls who have received the remiſſion of ſins, and whoſe ſouls and bodies are hallowed by the Holy Spirit, and ſet apart to be the temple of God. Theſe are they who have their eyes anointed with the eye-ſalve, and they ſee God; they ſee Jeſus, they have him with them according to his promiſe when he went away, and ſaid, “the world ſhall not ſee me, but ye ſee me;” and in the Hebrews it is written, “We ſee Jeſus, who was made lower than the angels,” i. e. our eyes are opened, we now ſee God, we view him in his bleeding form by faith and in ſpirit, and yet ſo truly, and with ſuch heart ſatisfaction, as if he ſtood bodily before us. We know he is at no diſtance, we behold him, and faith ſerves us inſtead of ſight, and is better to us than ſeeing for the preſent: “Bleſſed are they  
they

they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Besides all the happiness we have here in this respect, we shall here after see his face, and be where he is. We shall see that loving God before whom the Seraphims cover their faces. We shall see where the thorns and blows hurt and disfigured his visage. We shall see his hands and feet, we shall look upon his side, and delight and feast ourselves with this beatifical vision to all eternity, when wicked men, apostates and unbelievers shall fly from his presence in the great day, and shall hide themselves in rocks and mountains, we shall see him with joy, and all whose hearts have been purged by his blood from dead works, and purified from sin, may say with Job, "I shall see God, and shall see him for myself and not for another." "Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God!"

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called children of God." It is a satanical spirit to stir up strife, to foment and make mischief between religious people especially. Who loves divisions, disputings, janglings, and tale-bearing, or is fond of finding faults or uncovering the nakedness of his fellow-servants, he is on the devil's side, and joins the accuser of the brethren; such should be marked and shunned, they are the bad leaven in the lump, and do much harm; but "Blessed are the peace-makers," people who love unity, and are glad to cover and hide any blemish or mistake, and even to think the best, and not evil; who will not slander, nor hear slanders; who will not back-bite nor suffer it; but who, Jesus like, could die for the brethren, and who love peace, and spare no pains tenderly to root out all highness, rash and hasty words and behaviour, and who learn to be mild and gentle, and will do any thing to make men at peace in one house, and to



keep up that divine harmony among the children of God, which becomes them; for they are one man's sons, they are brethren and must not fall out by the way. Blessed are they who reconcile those at variance, remove the mistakes and misunderstandings that caused the evil, and who take the place of the mediator and advocate. They resemble Jesus, and are and shall be called children of God and of peace, children of their Father which is in heaven, who hates quarrels and fightings, and scatters such as delight in war.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Formerly, in the time of the law, the worshippers of God and the religious men and women did not seem to be the butt and mark of satan's malice so much as now. The prophets indeed were persecuted, and that because they generally brought heavy tidings to their own people, and were continually striking at the pride, idolatry, and unfaithfulness of the children of Israel, and speaking of a new-covenant, a better priesthood, and of the salvation of the Gentiles, and other such things, which were contrary to the great ideas they had of their own religion, and heavy to flesh and blood, especially their plain reproofs for sin, and the threatnings with which they frequently were sent; but else the Jewish church, from the time of their coming out of Egypt, were honorable and revered by all people, who saw how the Lord their God fought for them, besides the driving out whole nations and slaying kings for their sakes. He put a dread and a fear of them in all countries; they who strove against them perished by judgments, and those who despised them were glad to be hewers of wood or drawers of water to them. When they were small in number, one could chase a thousand, and



and five put five thousand to flight ; the Lord was a Man of war and Leader of their hosts, his angels slew their enemies by thousands in a night ; the skies showered down hail-stones and fire on those who hated them, the stars in their courses fought against them ; and only at times when they had sinned in departing from the Lord, he suffered them to be led away captive, and let their enemies be lords over them, but else they were the city of perfection, the joy of the whole earth. The pomp and glory of their church seemed to bid defiance to all the world, and this lasted till Jesus came. Our Saviour knew it would be quite otherwise after his decease, for he foresaw with what rage the devil would pursue his poor sheep, when he should come to know what their Shepherd had done by his dying for them ; it was therefore our Saviour gave his disciples warning of it, as if he had told them, Little children, ye must not think my kingdom is of this world, for though hitherto Jerusalem and the family of Israel have so long flourished in the earth like a vine, and all the glory of the Gentiles have flowed to it, yet it has been for a sign and a shadow of that Jerusalem which is above, and of that church which is at present invisible in the world. The prophets to whom I opened the mystery of my redemption, and who were my faithful witnesses, were a poor despised and excluded people for my sake, and the object of the scorn of satan, and the hatred of their brethren the children of Israel, they have been all persecuted, some they stoned, others were sawn asunder, and all rejected and cast out of the vineyard, so will my children and disciples be henceforth. As I have been hated, so they will hate them ; and as upon my Father's account, and for doing his will, they have persecuted me, so for my sake and for my righteousness

ness sake they will be persecuted who follow me; but esteem such blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. My people above have all come out of great tribulation, and in like manner will satan try all believers; he will pursue them like a dragon, and set the world against them, but let them be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, shortly they shall tread upon the adder, and the lion and the dragon shall they tread under their feet, "Comfort ye, comfort ye therefore, my people," and when ye see any troubled on my account, or for the sake of my righteousness, then speak comfortably to them, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "And even ye, blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

This doctrine of our Lord Christ was soon found true; for scarcely the devil knew the world was redeemed out of his hands, and he had lost all with equity through our Saviour's death and suffering, and that now he had here but a short time, but he began to rage and raise up the kings of the earth, and put the counsellors to consult together against the Lord and his Anointed. All who called on his name were persecuted, and that before the apostles had well begun their great ministry. Hence, when they preached or wrote to the churches, they taught them, that whoever would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. This doctrine continues unalterably the same. Now, as well as formerly, men who love our Saviour, who mention only his righteousness, and are determined only to know him, will for that, and no other cause, be hated and reviled; men will be so inveterate against them, that they

they will report all manner of evil against them; men in all religions, of all sorts of tempers, will be their enemies, and separate them from their company, and cast out their names as evil, will go so far as not to buy or sell with them; parents disown their children, children abhor their parents; masters discard and turn away their servants, threaten and distress such as live under them, and all this, as Luther says, 'Not because they are murderers, adulterers, or thieves, but because they love Jesus Christ, and will have no God beside him, or seek, or preach, or value any righteousness but his, which he wrought out in obedience to the death of the cross.' It is not because they are opposers of governments, plotters against the state, idle, wicked, malicious, or hurtful but because they believe the gospel and promises of Christ, because they exalt the Lord alone, because they are witnesses of his love and mercy, and are not ashamed of his name nor his faith, because his words are weightier than all other arguments, and of more force than all demonstrations whatever beside. If this be the case, they should not be therefore discouraged or dejected, but leap for joy and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they their Lord and dear Master, and the prophets which were before them. It is an honour and glory to them to share in their Lord's shame, and follow him thus out of the camp bearing his reproach, for they shall follow him in his glory in that day when he shall come with all his angels, and then he shall confess them, and shew such as despised them how much he loved them.

Yes, surely, a day shall come when all the derided followers of the Lamb, and such as for his sake were the scorn of men and the outcasts of the people, shall be glorified in their sight who made them a by-word  
and



and proverb of reproach; they shall see them with their dear Master on the clouds of heaven, and shall be forced to acknowledge with shame and amazement, We fools counted their lives madness, and their end to be without honour, but see how they are numbered with the saints, and have their portion with the children of God. Then shall they be truly honourable, and all nations shall call them blessed. Every blessing pronounced by the mouth of Jesus, and every blessing purchased by his blood shall come upon them, and be theirs for ever.

May we also believe, so be converted, and made after our Saviour's heart, that all these blessings may come upon us, in time and to all eternity. Amen.

F I N I S.



